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SERMON

PREACHED

AT THE

GENERAL ORDINATION

HOLDEN AT

BANGOR,

ON

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 1800.

By John Jones, M. A. Curate of Cyffylliog.

*ated to a Vicarage in Bangor-Cathedral by Bp Cleaver
to the Archdeaconry of Merioneth by Bp Randolph 1809.*



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SERMON

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BY

AT THE

GENERAL ORDINATION

HOLDEN AT

BANGOR

ON

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 1860

By John Fane, M. A., Canon of Exeter



TO THE RIGHT REVEREND

WILLIAM,

CLEAVER

Lord Bishop of Bangor,

THIS DISCOURSE,

PUBLISHED BY HIS COMMAND,

IS

MOST RESPECTFULLY

INSCRIBED,

BY HIS

MUCH OBLIGED,

AND

MOST OBEDIENT

SERVANT,

JOHN JONES.

TO THE HONORABLE SENATE

OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

IN SENATE

January 12, 1881

REPORT

OF THE COMMISSIONERS OF THE LAND OFFICE

IN RESPONSE TO A RESOLUTION

PASSED BY THE SENATE

APRIL 18, 1880

AND

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 18, 1880

ALBANY:

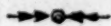
JOHN JOHNSON, PRINTERS

1881

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1881

A SERMON.



TITUS ii. 7, 8.

In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works; in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he, that is of the contrary part, may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.

THE dignity, the importance, and the difficulty, annexed to the office of a Minister of the Church of Christ, have justly entitled it to the highest respect from those, whose best interests it is designed to serve; and imperiously call upon every one, who presumes to undertake so momentous a trust, to use, with studious diligence, the means most calculated to qualify him for the discharge of its awful duties.

To be admitted to the ministry of God's word and sacraments, is to be called to an employment of intrinsic worth and excellence. Other situations may be ennobled by the talents, the virtues, and the exalted qualities of those who fill them; but the high honour of being engaged in the immediate service of God, as his messengers of peace to mankind, and the ministers of reconciliation, has within itself, and that in the most eminent degree, every thing that can claim our respect and veneration. For, whether we consider the illustrious character of Him, who

founded the Christian ministry, or the sublime truths it is appointed to declare, and the incalculable advantages it is intended to convey to man, in every respect, its superiority is apparent and decided. Its origin is divine, derived from the Son of God, the Redeemer of Mankind, the Fountain of Light and Life, the Author and Finisher of our Faith. Our blessed Lord first afforded in himself the most perfect pattern of a faithful minister of the gospel; and then commissioned his apostles to succeed him in the awful charge—"as his Father sent him, even so sent he them." He endued them with extraordinary powers; he enlightened them by his Holy Spirit; he supported them in danger, and rescued them, in many remarkable instances, from the malice of their enemies. And that an institution, thus divinely founded, might never cease to answer those gracious purposes of permanent benefit to his faithful servants, which its Author intended, he promised to be with them to the end of the world.

Nor was it possible that those purposes could be other than worthy the infinitely enlightened mind, from which they proceeded. To reveal the knowledge of God to mankind, to break down the barriers of ignorance, superstition, and atheism, and to disclose the wonders of creation, were objects which might merit the exertion of infinite goodness and wisdom. But the merciful designs of the Saviour of the world did not stop at the mere speculative improvement of those who should receive his instructions; the manners were to be amended, by rectify-

ing the inward principles of action ; the understanding was to be enlightened, and the heart to be purified by that powerful operation of the spirit, which attends an unfeigned assent to the truths of the gospel ; and eternal happiness to be conveyed and secured to all who should comply with the conditions of obtaining it.

The Christian ministry was at first instituted to be the vehicle of these inestimable benefits to the nations, who had hitherto been enveloped in darkness and in bondage to sin : and to diffuse them as extensively as possible was then, and still continues to be, the peculiar duty of those who are engaged in it. Dignified and important their employment certainly is ; but equally difficult. Zeal, activity, and an accurate knowledge of the religion they teach, are indispensably requisite ; and these should be supported by patience, perseverance, and resolution.— Ignorance is perverse and obstinate ; but no opportunity of removing it should be lost, however unthankfully instruction may be received. Vice is daring and presumptuous : this must be resisted by meek, but firm, exertions in the cause of virtue and religion. The darling passions of men must be restrained ; their avarice, their lust, and their ambition must be exhibited in their true colours, as totally incompatible with the purity of a renovated nature. Every thing, which is repugnant to divine grace, the servant of God must set himself strenuously to oppose. He must not court applause by flattering concessions to folly or iniquity. Called to

preach a gospel of righteousness, and to proclaim the appointment of a day, in which God will judge the world by that man, whom he hath chosen, he must not dissemble the strict nature of the conditions, on which alone we can hope to stand before that awful tribunal without amazement.

Who then is sufficient for these things? Who can hope to perform, with success, a task so important and so difficult? By his own abilities no man: but that gracious God, who said to the apostle of the Gentiles, "My grace is sufficient for thee," is still willing and ready to afford the most ample assistance to his faithful servants. Those, whom he hath truly led by his spirit to engage in this great work, he will by no means desert in its progress.

Some of us, my brethren, have already declared our belief, that we were thus guided; and it is much too awful a declaration to suppose any would presume to make it, unless convinced of its truth with respect to themselves. If therefore we on our part are not deficient in subsequent attention to our duties, we may fairly hope for the effectual co-operation of heaven. But we must neglect no source of information, no means of improvement; we must give attention to reading, to exhortation, and to doctrine. The holy scriptures must be our delight and study: from them alone can we learn to save ourselves and others. And with a view to the particular duties of our profession, the precepts of St. Paul will claim our most serious regard. His instruc-

tions will inform our understandings ; and his example will animate our endeavours. Permit me, under the sanction of authority, to recommend to you both the one and the other : and in a more especial manner the excellent admonition in my text ; “ that in all things we should shew ourselves patterns of good works ; in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned ; that he, that is of the contrary part, may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of us.” These words, I conceive, offer to our notice two very important objects, viz. the manner in which we should deliver the truths of the gospel ; and the example we ought to give in our own persons, of the efficacy of its precepts.

Our Saviour says, “ Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of heaven, as a little child, he shall not enter therein.” The simplicity and sincerity required in every one, who becomes the disciple of Christ, can be compared to nothing but the unprejudiced disposition of an infant. Every bias, derived from the false maxims of a deluded world, must be cheerfully sacrificed ; because, if indulged, it would oppose the reception of truth. But if this is necessary in those who hear the gospel, how much more in those who preach it ! how careful should they be, lest they mix the vain traditions of men with the pure doctrines of Christ ! Uncorruptness and sincerity should eminently characterize him who proclaims the conditions of salvation. From the fountain of knowledge, the stream of truth hath flowed to him pure and unpolluted. The offer of eternal life, and

the means of obtaining it, are explicitly declared in the word of God. If from passion or from prejudice he adds to, or diminishes from, this sacred revelation of the will of heaven, he is guilty of corrupting the source of divine instruction, and must be answerable for the consequences of his error. When St. Paul was taking his leave of the church of Ephesus, it was his greatest consolation to think, that he had kept back from them nothing that was profitable; that he had been active and sincere in the discharge of his ministry, and had fully discovered to them the way of eternal life. Let us, my brethern, follow this illustrious pattern, as he followed Christ. There lies upon us the same obligation to declare the whole counsel of God in purity and sincerity: yea, woe be unto us, if we neglect to do it! But if with a zeal adequate to our conviction of the truth, with competent knowledge and with unprejudiced simplicity, we preach the gospel as we have received it, our reward will be great in heaven.

Nor is it less necessary for a Minister, both in his public functions, and in his ordinary intercourse with the world, to observe a decent gravity in his manner, and take heed that he offend not with his tongue.—In the whole compass of heaven and earth, there is nothing more serious, nothing more important, than the truths he delivers. If then, upon those momentous subjects, he betrays the smallest degree of levity, his own belief of them will be questioned; the foundation, on which others rest their faith, will be shaken; to the weak, he will be a stumbling block; to all, an offence: and the cause of religion will re-

ceive a deeper wound by one act of careless indiscretion, than many serious discourses will be able perfectly to heal. It is indeed matter of real astonishment and regret, that any can speak lightly of the religion they profess. But when he, whose peculiar province it is to impress more strongly upon men the conviction of divine truth, and the obligations of morality ; when he allows himself to speak of either, but with the highest respect, the guilt he incurs is much more than can be expressed. He in fact misleads those into sin and irreligion, whose salvation he is most solemnly bound to advance by every means in his power. He is guilty at once of treachery to his God, to his fellow Christians, and the everlasting interests of his own immortal soul.

But it is not enough that we deliver the doctrines of the gospel with truth and sincerity ; that we upon all occasions speak of religion with reverence ; that we guard against any indiscreet levity, which may give offence to our fellow Christians : our hearers have a right to look up to us as patterns and examples of those virtues we recommend to them ; as guides, who not only point out the way to heaven, but themselves go before* to shew the practicability of pursuing it. The obligations of religion and morality are indeed equally binding upon all. It is not the priest alone, who must answer for his transgressions, but all must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to receive either reward or punishment, according to their behaviour in this state of probation. Yet it is natural to expect that those, whose peculiar employment it is to study the nature of these

obligations, and to examine the sanctions upon which they rest, should, from their superior conviction, be more attentive to the regulation of their conduct.— It is natural to expect, that he, who is continually insisting upon the necessity of sobriety, of honesty, of chastity, and of charity; who endeavours to deter others from the breach of these duties, by the awful prospect of everlasting punishment, and who animates his hearers to the observance of them by the hopes of eternal happiness: it is natural to expect, that he should himself be a bright example of these necessary virtues.

It were indeed much to be wished, that all Christians would themselves examine the nature of their duties, and the grounds upon which they are obliged to perform them; and act upon the conviction thus produced. But it is in the nature of man to be led by example, to adopt the practices of those, with whom he associates, and blindly to fall into that course of life, which his neighbours most generally pursue. More or less perhaps this depraved modification of the social principle operates upon all; but with too many the only rule of action is the conduct of others. From indolence, from a disrelish to the investigation of truth, and in some, perhaps, from incapacity, a regular and settled conduct, formed on right principles of religion and virtue, is rarely to be seen in the world. But from whatever cause this general tendency to acquiesce in the habits of others may originate, it affords a powerful incitement to those, whose example may be of weight, to be doubly circumspect in their behaviour. Many may think lightly or

seriously of the guilt of sin, as they observe them negligent or careful in the regulation of their lives. And with none ought this argument to have greater weight, than with us, the Ministers of Christ: for in examining the nature of our duties as such, it is surely a strong reason to induce us to frame our lives according to the precepts of the gospel, that our behaviour may mislead the judgment, or rectify the errors of those committed to our charge; that holiness of life, and purity of sentiment, will appear matters of great or little moment according to the respect we pay them; that religion will have an easy access to the mind, or meet with insurmountable obstacles, as it is recommended by our obedience, or disgraced by our perversion of its truths.

But it is not with those only, who acknowledge themselves the objects of our professional care, that our conduct may serve or disserve the cause of religion. It is a reason assigned by the apostle to urge us to be patterns of good works, that he, who is of the contrary part, may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of us. And indeed this could not have been a stronger reason in his days than it is in ours. The characters of Ministers could not then have been more severely animadverted upon; nor could the heathens themselves be more ingenious in discovering their faults, or more pleased with the discovery, than some modern Christians. Those, who indulge in vice, are eager to sanction their sin by our example; those, who are hostile to the advantages we enjoy, rejoice to proclaim our demerits; and even some, who pretend to be the best friends of our establish-

ment, shew their zeal for religion by railing at the clergy. It is in vain to argue against the folly or injustice of such people. If we would labour effectually to repel the calumnies with which we are beset, it must be by avoiding every appearance of evil, by giving no occasion of offence, and by letting our light so shine before men, that they may acknowledge us faithful Ministers of the religion we profess.

We, in this place, are peculiarly called upon to be careful in this respect from the situations, in which we are to exercise our ministry. To the sorrow of every good man, our parishes are divided, and our people led astray by an enthusiastic spirit of innovation in matters of religion. It is indeed incumbent upon us to oppose the progress of these dangerous delusions by every argument, with which reason and scripture may supply us. But it would dispose the minds of men for a more ready attention to our reasoning, if we first endeavoured to conciliate their affection to our persons. Not a few of those, who have forsaken the regular assemblies of the established church, have been induced to do so rather by the specious appearance of superior sanctity, assumed by their self-constituted teachers, than by the strength of their arguments, or the force of their eloquence. To minds therefore thus favourably disposed to religion in general, and not yet corrupted by any fundamental error in doctrine, diligence in our professional duties, and circumspection in our ordinary conduct, cannot fail effectually to recommend us.— A holy life must forcibly appeal to their hearts ; and convince them, that we have no end in view, but to

secure their salvation and our own. Here let us rest our cause, and we shall certainly prevail. There is still amongst our countrymen a general respect for the clerical character : let it be supported by superior virtue, by more ardent zeal, and more active exertions in behalf of religion, and it will be beloved.— Our sheep are indeed gone astray ; but let us call to them with the mild, but persuasive, voice of Christian charity, and they will yet return.

To the arguments already adduced for activity in the discharge of our public functions and evangelical purity of manners, let me add the force of the vows we are about to make. No oath can be more solemn or more binding. In them we dedicate ourselves to the immediate service of God ; we engage to make his glory and the salvation of souls the peculiar object of our labours ; we promise to fashion our own lives so as to be examples to the flock of Christ, and to watch over their eternal interests with the most earnest solicitude. These vows we take upon ourselves voluntarily, in a persuasion that we are led thereto by the Spirit of God ; and we are guilty of the most detestable hypocrisy, if we presume to make them without the most determined resolutions to keep them to the end. It is true, our own strength is insufficient ; but the merciful assistance of heaven will be granted to those, who sincerely ask it. Prayer is the appointed means to man of obtaining the divine grace, the channel through which the blessings of infinite goodness are conveyed. As therefore we are convinced of our own insufficiency, as we are convinced that our own abili-

ties are inadequate to the discharge of so important a trust, let us constantly pray to God, that He would guide, support, and strengthen us in our difficult and momentous undertaking.

And you, who are to be the objects of our care, and who are so much interested in the success of our labours, assist us with your most fervent addresses to the Throne of Grace. We are now going to consecrate ourselves, our time, and our abilities, to the advancement of your salvation. Think of us, I beseech you, with charity, and entreat the Lord of Heaven and Earth to shower down upon us the choicest of his gifts, and make us firm, active, and faithful, in the stewardship with which we are entrusted. So may God at last bring us all to the mansions of everlasting happiness, and gather us into one fold, under one shepherd, Jesus Christ our Saviour. *Amen.*

FINIS.

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